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# Keeping Your Friends Close: How the House Freedom Caucus Organized for Survival

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# Keeping Your Friends Close: How the House Freedom Caucus Organized for Survival

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Dedicated to my loving and supportive parents and grandparents without whom I would never have made it to graduate school.

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# Keeping Your Friends Close: How the House Freedom Caucus Organized for Survival

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Polarization of the two parties in the U.S. House is clear, but the intra-party homogeneity required for different theories of party government has faded. Party leaders have responded to this new factional insurgence with punishment. In this paper I ask how insurgent factions survive powerful parties and their leaders. By examining the member-to-member contribution networks of House Republicans from 2013-2016, I find an active and defensive House Freedom Caucus (HFC), whose members support one another more than they support other House Republicans. And, I show how HFC members create an independent fundraising network to insulate themselves from partisan retribution.

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# Chapter 1

# Introduction & Literature

## 1.1 Introduction

In 1991, working to reverse the trend of party-decline scholarship within the Congress literature, David Rohde (1991) posited that party leaders had an obligation to move legislative items onto the agenda if there was widespread agreement within the majority party of the House. He suggested his theory had credibility mainly due to the increasing homogeneity within each of the two parties. Today, polarization seems to have peaked and overlapping ideologies between the two parties members' are, at least, rare (Theriault, 2008). Despite this polarization, it seems that the heterogeneity of parties past has returned. Since their formation in 2014, the House Freedom Caucus best exemplifies this return of insurgence.[1] They can be credited with major policy influence (the defeat of the American Health Care Act), the ousting of a House Speaker (John Boehner), and general disruption on the floor (demanding roll-call votes on arbitrary floor items). If we are to agree that party leaders have increased in strength since the publication of Rohde's work, as has been argued by many

[1]The HFC technically first formed in late December 2014 from a series of private meetings. But, the faction was not active in Congress until the start of the 114th Congress in January 2015. The popular press covered their formation as a faction, however, see Rubin (2017) for an excellent scholarly account.

scholars since (Cox and McCubbins, 1993; Sinclair, 1999; Theriault, 2008; Curry, 2015), we should expect leaders to crack down on defections and disruptions from rank-and-file members.

In their review of punishment by parties from 1965-2015, Green and Bee (2017) find 22 instances of punishment, which over 50 years may seem like a low number. But, 13 of the 22 punishments were handed down by Speaker John Boehner alone.[2] Punishment need not be confined to the halls of the Capitol though. A recent and specific example best illustrates the electoral punishments pursued by House Republican leaders. During the 2016 primary election the House Republican leadership supported the challenger of incumbent Tim Huelskamp. He ultimately lost his seat.[3] In response, Huelskamp–a member of the House Freedom Caucus–sat on the House floor for hours demanding roll-call votes on noncontroversial bills, citing a lack of transparency in procedural processes as his reasoning.[4]

Given that party leaders have accepted and utilized their increase in power, how can insurgent factions survive powerful party leadership? To address

[2]In Green and Bee (2017)'s study, they found that punishment resulted from general disloyalty, voting against party policy priorities on the House floor, voting against Boehners speakership bid, voting against rules, and refusing to contribute to the National Republican Campaign Committee. The punishments handed down were members being removed from committees, subcommittees, and leadership posts. Forty percent of the punishments were followed by further disloyalty, party switching, or the punishment being rescinded.

[3]The only other HFC member to be defeated since the start of the caucus is Scott Garrett, who lost in the 2016 general election to Democrat Josh Gottheimer. Other caucus members have retired from Congress, left the caucus, or been appointed in the executive branch.

[4]Originally reported in Roll Call, "Huelskamp Forces House to Go on Record," by Lindsey McPherson.

this question, I focus on the recent formation and endurance of the House Freedom Caucus. Using itemized Leadership Political Action Committee (LPAC) disbursement data from the Federal Election Commission (FEC), I use social network analysis to map the House Republican Party member-to-member contribution networks for the 2014 and 2016 election cycles. My analysis reveals an active and defensive House Freedom Caucus alongside an overloaded and inconsequential Republican Study Committee. I find that House Freedom Caucus members donate more to one another than they do to non-caucus members and they receive less money from them. The ability to minimize financial punishment implies the HFC is highly organized and cohesive in its electoral strategy. Further, I find that leaders continue to distribute money to members who toe the party line and are in close races. But, while parties are certainly maintaining control over growing financial resources, my results suggest that party leaders' ability to punish faction members with campaign finances may be tenuous-at best. By focusing on member-to-member contribution networks, I demonstrate a new method for empirically revealing the electoral tactics of insurgent factions. In the next section, I discuss the literature on political parties, leaders, and LPACs. I then turn to a discussion of my hypotheses, data, and methodology. I close with a discussion of my findings and their implications.

## 1.2 Party Leaders & Leadership PACs

The role of party leaders has evolved with the institution over time. Scholars argue about how much power leaders truly wield. Cooper and Brady

(1981) argue that institutional context determines the strength of party leaders. That is, stronger parties lead to stronger leaders–but some factors, and chiefly constituency preferences, limit leaders in constraining their rank-and-file members.[5] Strahan (2007) takes a stronger stand, arguing that leaders are causal agents who can lead and unite heterogeneous party caucuses for legislative goals of their own (see also Green (2010)). Each of these works is incredibly important for developing an understanding of leadership in Congress because they identify tools of party leaders and discuss the effectiveness of those tools.[6] I contribute to this literature by identifying an important electoral tool: distributing (and re-distributing) campaign funds. I argue that leaders utilize this tool to both reward those who stick to the party line and punish those who defect.

Scholars also offer many theories for understanding the role of parties in Congress more generally. Rohde (1991) (and later Aldrich and Rohde (2000)), as already noted briefly, develops the theory of Conditional Party Government. Alternatively, Cox and McCubbins (1993, 2005) present Party Cartel Theory arguing that the majority party operates as a legislative and procedural cartel, with rank-and-file members maintaining negative agenda control. More recently, Koger and Lebo (2017) present their theory of Strategic Party Government, arguing that parties are fundamentally diverse and aim to serve a

[5]While I do not measure constituencies or their preferences in this paper, LPAC donations have been shown to correlate positively with members in close races (i.e. in districts with heterogeneous constituent preferences) (Currinder, 2003).

[6]See Froman and Ripley (1965), Sinclair (1983, 1999), and Jenkins and Stewart (2012) for excellent theoretical and historical accounts of varying levels of party leadership strength.

broad coalition of supporters. To maintain their coalition, party leaders may pin their members against one another for the collective electoral interest of the party (Koger and Lebo, 2017). What I seek to highlight is very similar; that is, collective and deliberate punishment of a faction in the name of strengthening the party and its broader coalition.

To analyze the punishment of faction members I examine Leadership PAC contributions. Leadership PACs are not the most common way to measure internal congressional dynamics, but we do know a good deal about these committees already. They developed initially out of the 1970s House reforms that deemphasized seniority norms (Baker, 1989; Currinder, 2003). As leadership in the House strengthened, leaders moved to help members get reelected in return for toeing the party line on the floor; LPACs, thus, represented a new mechanism to support members (Currinder, 2003). The uses today are similar amongst leaders; and, rank-and-file members have joined in too–some of whom use their LPAC funds to signal support in leadership races (Baker, 1989; Mann and Ornstein, 2006). Scholars have reason to believe these supporting and signaling activities are on the rise. Heberlig and Larson (2005) find that member-to-member contributions have increased over time, and especially among incumbents, which is corroborated by Powell (2017), who finds that member-to-member contributions are now the primary determinant of advancement within the congressional party structures. Furthermore, LPACs are also used to support fellow committee members in an attempt to form alliances (Wilcox, 1990) or even just for personal, instead of party, advancement (Hopkin,

2004).

Are Leadership PACs the right measure? Should I instead be using roll-call votes, committee assignments, or floor speeches? Each of these alternative activities are highly visible. And, while all Leadership PAC receipts and disbursements are publicly available online via the FEC, the activities of these committees are rarely reported on in the media. I argue that the level of visibility of any given activity is important. For leaders, using LPACs is a covert way to punish members while also minimizing any speculation that trouble is prevalent within the party. Furthermore, Heberlig and Larson (2010) find that–compared to the contribution strategies applied to principal campaign committees–Leadership PAC contribution strategies are almost always more party-oriented. Their findings establish firm footing for the use of LPAC disbursements to detect meaningful dynamics within parties. And, Theriault (2013) does just this type of analysis; he uses Leadership PACs to understand the behavior of the Gingrich Senators and determine if they are supporting one another more than other party members.[7] Let us turn now to the hypotheses.

[7]To be clear, I restrict my data to LPACs for two reasons. First, because I am interested chiefly in the internal power dynamics of Congress, exogenous factors–like party activists or party-aligned interest groups–are certainly important, but their effects are not what I seek to address in this paper. Second, the inclusion of exogenous actors could quickly unravel this directed study. Once conceding to measure the influence of one exogenous actor, it is difficult to justify which actors should be included and which should be excluded.

# Chapter 2

# Hypotheses & Methodology

## 2.1 Hypotheses

Factions, such as the Democratic Study Group or the Republican Study Committee, have coordinated their members and survived independently for long periods before (Rubin, 2017; Wallner, 2017; Rohde, 1991). The House Freedom Caucus should be no exception to organizing for survival and a natural first step is to establish a fundraising network to support their members. Therefore, if HFC members are coordinating in ways similar to the Republican Study Committee or the Democratic Study Group have previously, I expect to find two different things. First, I should find that HFC members are actively distributing money to one another as they become organized for the 2016 election cycle. Second, contingent upon HFC activity being intended for intra-faction support, the HFC members should form a dense cluster in the member-to-member contribution network. If a cluster does form, it is indicative of an independent fundraising network where HFC members are supporting one another with frequent and/or large donations. Therefore, I specify the following hypotheses related to HFC network-level activity.

*Fundraising Hypothesis:* House Freedom Caucus members are more active in the 2016 network, indicating their need to fundraise independently.

*Clustering Hypothesis:* House Freedom Caucus members form a distinct cluster in the 2016 network, suggesting intra-faction support.

If I do detect increased HFC LPAC activity, I must then determine whether or not their contributions to one another are statistically significant from any other contributions to other House Republicans. Therefore, I expect to find that membership in the House Freedom Caucus is significant for understanding member-to-member contribution behavior. Clearly, I expect HFC members to donate more to one another. But, I also expect some level of punishment from House Republican leaders and their rank-and-file team-player colleagues.

*Caucus Support Hypothesis:* Being a House Freedom Caucus member will increase LPAC contributions to fellow caucus members.

*Punishment Hypothesis:* Being a House Freedom Caucus member will decrease LPAC contributions from fellow party members.

Collectively, these hypotheses suggest a highly organized House Freedom Caucus and a House Republican Party that struggles to effectively punish its

members.

## 2.2 Methodology & Data

I use Federal Election Commission data on LPACs from the 2014 and 2016 election cycles as the foundation for my social network analysis. Politics is a network phenomenon and power can be exceptionally difficult to measure when independence of observations is assumed (McClurg and Lazer, 2014). Social network analysis addresses these issues by turning a spotlight onto the relational links among actors. I follow in the footsteps of many scholars who agree that this distinction is important, and who have applied social network analysis to legislatures (Fowler, 2006; Victor and Ringe, 2009; Koger, Masket and Noel, 2010; Kirkland and Gross, 2014; Victor and Koger, 2016). In this paper, I utilize both descriptive and inferential methods and hope to highlight a new method for empirically revealing the electoral tactics of insurgent factions. Due to the nature of network data, autocorrelation is high (Krackhardt, 1988). To correct for this, I conduct regression analysis utilizing the Quadratic Assignment Procedure (QAP) (Krackhardt, 1988; Dekker, Krackhardt and Snijders, 2007).

Before getting too deep into the data, allow me to note a few coding decisions I made at the member level. Because membership to the House Freedom Caucus is secret; I started with Desilver (2015)'s membership list and

collected information as I found it.[1] My appendix contains a table with the House Freedom Caucus membership as I could verify it. The Republican Study Committee membership list is available directly from their caucus website.[2] Leadership is defined as the roles of Speaker of the House, Majority Leader, Majority Whip, Chief Deputy Whip, House Republican Conference Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary, NRCC Chairman, and Republican Policy Committee Chairman. As a control variable in my regression analysis, I also utilize 2012 and 2014 election results provided by Sean Theriault and coded as proportion of winning vote.[3]

Using FEC LPAC summary files,[4] I identified the LPACs that belonged to House Republicans who were members from the previous Congress or who were successful challengers running for House seats (i.e. not running for the Senate or a state-level position). Using a pointed and inclusive method for selecting LPACs allows for cleaner analysis of how leaders like Boehner or Cantor distributed their money, even after they left Congress. Figure 2.1 displays the 2014 LPAC disbursement network and Figure 2.2 displays the 2016 LPAC disbursement network.

For both network figures, each node is a member of Congress. Rank-and-file members are red nodes, party leaders and chairs of committees are

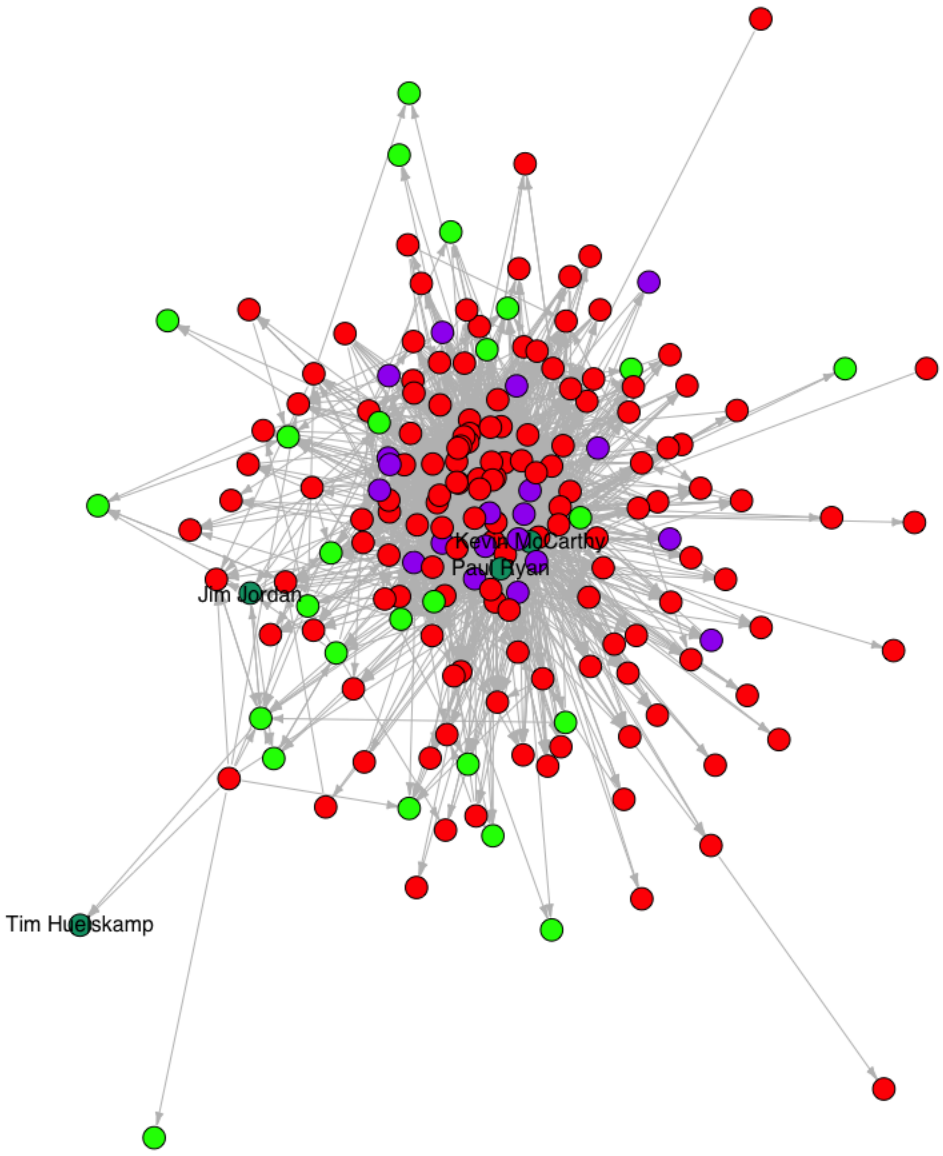
[1] This largely means paying attention when congressional reporters attribute membership in their reporting.

[2] http://rsc.walker.house.gov

[3] Where there was a runoff general election, the runoff results were used.

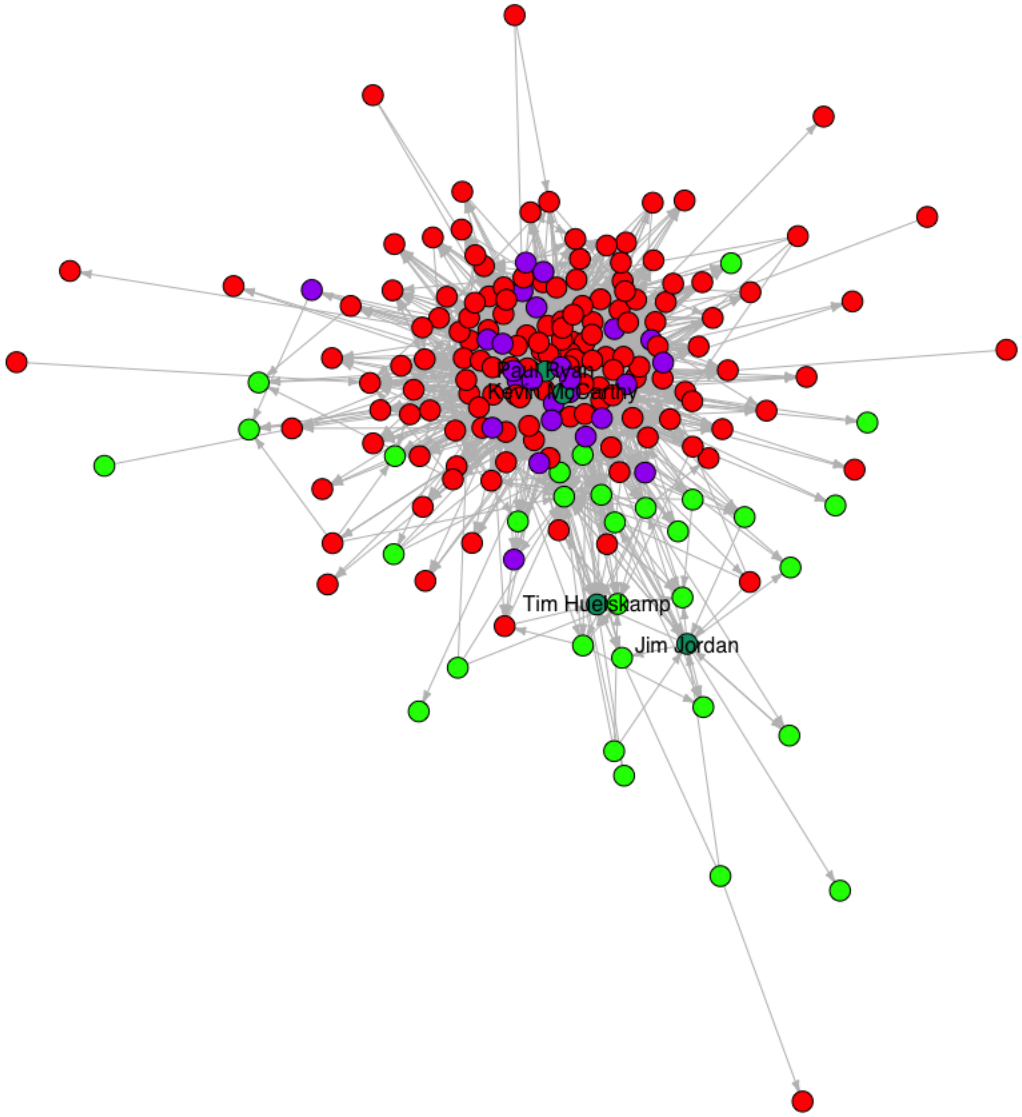
[4] http://www.fec.gov/data/DataCatalog.do?cf=downloadable

Figure 2.1: 2014 LPAC Disbursement Network




purple nodes, and HFC members are green nodes. The edges of this network are

Figure 2.2: 2016 LPAC Disbursement Network




valued, based on total dollars transferred between any two nodes in question.[5]

[5] "Edges" in social network analysis refers to the lines denoting a connection between one

Due to the density of the network, I have visually removed edge thickness, but for the calculation of network statistics, values of the edges are taken into account. These network figures are graphed using the FruchtermanReingold algorithm, which means that, on average, more central (i.e. active) members will be placed in the center of the networks.

Both networks feature the nodes of House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Speaker Paul Ryan labeled and centrally located. These two members are raising and disbursing large sums of money in both the 2014 and 2016 election cycles. I have also highlighted the HFC Chairman during the 114th Congress, Jim Jordan, and Tim Huelskamp. Generally, the HFC nodes appear to be distributed almost randomly throughout the 2014 network. But, in 2016 the HFC nodes cluster to one side of the network and appear to coalesce around Jim Jordan. Furthermore, note the sparse number of edges leading to Huelskamp in 2014 compared to his total inclusion in the HFC cluster in 2016. Such defensive activity is the motivation for this paper. I discuss these findings more precisely after discussing my methodological approaches.

### 2.2.1 Weighted Out-Degree Centrality

I calculate out-degree centrality scores to measure influence among members. Out-degree centrality is traditionally defined as the number of ties emanating from any given node-in-question (Freeman, 1978; Borgatti, 2005). That is, in the context of this paper, the score would describe how many

node and another node.

members any given member-in-question distributed money to. The original measure was designed for binary networks, but the measure has been generalized by Newman (2004*a*) to allow for the calculation of out-degree centrality based on the amount transferred between any pair of nodes that are connected. The logic is simple, larger disbursements to more members means a higher score. Substantively, a higher score means more influence in the House Republican LPAC network because the highest scoring members are controlling the largest amounts of money to the most members. Therefore, I utilize Newman (2004*a*)'s revised equation to account for both the number of members distributed to and how much money he or she distributed. Newman (2004*a*)'s revised out-degree centrality equation is shown below.

$$k_i = \sum_{j}^{N} A_{i,j} \tag{2.1}$$

Where $i$ is the node in question, $j$ is all other nodes, $N$ is total nodes in the network, and $A_{i,j}$ is the score from the weighted adjacency matrix denoting a value $> 0$ if there is a connection between the two nodes. The actual value of $A_{i,j}$ is based on a strength of the connection (i.e. the amount of money disbursed). Before reporting the centrality scores, I standardize them by dividing each member's out-degree score by $N - 1$. As a robustness test, I calculate eigenvector centrality scores for both networks. The eigenvector centrality scores were heavily biased towards members who were receiving a lot of money from a lot of members. I elaborate on these scores slightly, and Table A.2 lists these scores, in my appendix.

### 2.2.2 Community Detection

Because this paper is largely concerned with the response of the House Freedom Caucus to punishment, it is important that I am able to empirically identify the clustering of HFC members. To identify clustering in my network data, I rely on a community detection algorithm originally developed by Newman (2004*b*) and Clauset, Newman and Moore (2004). Community detection is based on the network property known as modularity. Modularity measures when communities begin and end by identifying highly dense areas of the network (in terms of edges), connected to other highly dense areas by only a few edges (Clauset, Newman and Moore, 2004).

The algorithm utilized in this paper accounts for the weight of edges, but it disregards the directional nature of those edges. I argue the disregard for direction is not of concern for two reasons. The first is that my main goal in using community detection is to find out if money was exchanged among small subsets of members. The directionality of gifts internal to the group(s) is irrelevant, at least for the question I am attempting to answer. The algorithm still identifies when resources are transmitted to or from the subset of members. In other words, density is of concern, not who the connecting member of the HFC to the leadership is. The second reason is that directionality is taken into account in my measure of centrality. Out-degree centrality will detect whether HFC members are more or less active in the overall House Republican LPAC network; and, community detection will determine whether HFC members were helping each other more than they were helping other House Republicans.

### 2.2.3 Quadratic Assignment Procedure

The Quadratic Assignment Procedure allows for a test of association despite the biases that come as a result of network data (Cranmer et al., 2017). QAP corrects for the dependencies of network data and is also an effective method for modeling the effects of exogenous covariates. Essentially, QAP can be seen as an "add on" for the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) estimator (Cranmer et al., 2017). Therefore, estimates do not change from those generated by OLS. But, QAP estimates are evaluated for statistical significance using a distribution generated during the procedure sans the bias generated from structural autocorrelation (Krackhardt, 1988; Cranmer et al., 2017). Furthermore, QAP is effective in producing estimates for networks with dense relationships (like the LPAC networks) and the logic for interpreting QAP results ends up being very similar to regression with dyadic data (Cranmer et al., 2017; Dekker, Krackhardt and Snijders, 2007).

The multiple regression via QAP utilized in this paper uses Dekker's "semi-partialling plus" procedure (Dekker, Krackhardt and Snijders, 2007). Dekker's procedure allows for more flexibility in the nature of the network data (Cranmer et al., 2017). Each element in the analysis is an $NxN$ matrix. I run separate models for the 2014 network and the 2016 network. The dependent variables are the 2014 and 2016 LPAC matrices, respectively. More specifically, the dependent variable is the number of dollars exchanged between a given pair of members in the given network. Therefore, the independent variables are also matrices; these variables detail the nature of the relationship that led to a cer-

tain donation amount between two actors. The independent variables included are theoretically divided into three categories, variables related to (1) the member giving the money, (2) the member receiving the money, and (3) the nature of their association. For each of these categories my model includes whether the member is in the House Republican leadership, the House Freedom Caucus, the Republican Study Committee, and her/his 2012 or 2014 election result. I also include three variables denoting whether both members in the exchange were HFC members, leaders, or RSC members. Each independent variable is binary except for the election results, which are proportions of vote-share from their respective 2012 or 2014 election.

# Chapter 3

# Findings & Conclusion

## 3.1 Findings

I report standardized centrality scores to allow for cross-network comparisons. The LPAC network out-degree centrality averages are 209.91 and 276.74 for 2014 and 2016, respectively. The members with the ten largest centrality scores for each network are listed below (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Most Active Members in LPAC Network - 2014 & 2016 Elections

| Member | 2014 Centrality | Member | 2016 Centrality |
|---|---|---|---|
| Eric Cantor | 6968.91 | Kevin McCarthy | 7621.36 |
| John Boehner | 3264.25 | Paul Ryan | 4035.14 |
| Kevin McCarthy | 3230.52 | Steve Scalise | 3206.24 |
| Paul Ryan | 2007.77 | Patrick McHenry | 2254.85 |
| Jeb Hensarling | 1893.28 | John Boehner | 2249.02 |
| Peter Roskam | 1154.90 | Jim Jordan | 2149.53 |
| Dave Camp | 1023.32 | Cathy McMorris Rodgers | 2082.52 |
| Aaron Schock | 1006.74 | Kevin Brady | 1984.34 |
| Steve Scalise | 973.65 | Greg Walden | 1781.07 |
| Bill Shuster | 940.41 | Jeb Hensarling | 1533.50 |

The members with the greatest centrality are the members the literature predicts should be highly active in raising and distributing funds in a party fundraising network: current and former Speakers, House Majority leaders, and

many other leaders and senior members (Powell, 2017; Currinder, 2008). HFC Chairman Jim Jordan, who is the sixth most active member in the 2016 LPAC network, presents one exception to this pattern. As we will see, this is not the level of fundraising he was involved in before the establishment of the HFC and this only further underscores a need to investigate the faction's activity.

The House Freedom Caucus centrality score averages are 39.21 and 105.58 for 2014 and 2016, respectively. Furthermore, it is critical to keep in mind that the HFC did not formally exist as a caucus during the 2014 election cycle. Of the HFC members I have identified (n=41), 28 members (68%) had an LPAC in the 2014 cycle and 33 members (80%) had an LPAC in the 2016 cycle. The fact that 68% of caucus members had an LPAC in 2014 implies the infrastructure to create an independent fundraising network. From the 2016 network, we see that infrastructure put to work.

Five members created LPACs for the 2016 election cycle and three more members established LPACs immediately upon taking office and joining the HFC. Overall, caucus aggregate activity noticeably increases in the 2016 network. The sum of net differences between 2016 and 2014 activity is 2489.94 (see Table 3.2), which is positive and relatively large–indicating an increase in activity. Six members have net differences greater than 50.00 (and only three members with net differences greater than -50.00). Individual HFC members had centrality scores 75.45 higher in 2016, on average. Centrality scores of 0 are the result of members contributing their LPAC funds to outsiders challenging establishment politicians, or they just contributed money to members not in

the network. It appears that much of the coordination for the defense of the caucus was delegated to Chairman Jim Jordan whose centrality score is a large outlier within the caucus. Still, on balance, HFC members were more active in the 2016 House Republican LPAC network than they were in 2014 (before becoming a caucus)–providing evidence for the Fundraising Hypothesis.

Having established that HFC members were more active in 2016, were they supporting each other more than other House Republicans? I address this question using community detection (see Table 3.3 and Table 3.4). The communities are numbered arbitrarily and each following column is the number of members for that respective affiliation.[1] The final column is the total number of members in each community. The 2014 network has two outlier groups of one member each, but otherwise the networks are very similar.

In the 2014 network, 19 HFC members are in the first (and largest) community, which I will refer to as the core community. Examining the core community, it is immediately apparent that its membership is very heterogeneous. In addition to the 19 HFC members, there are also 14 unaffiliated rank-and-file members, 53 RSC members, and 3 leaders (Eric Cantor, Patrick McHenry, and Steve Scalise). The core community does not seem to have any immediately apparent exogenous linkages among its members. The remaining HFC members are distributed throughout the rest of the communities, each of which is made up of a seemingly random collections of rank-and-file members,

[1] Affiliations are not mutually exclusive. That is, RSC members may also be HFC members, leaders may also be RSC members, etc.

as well as leaders. Community detection tends to have two extremes, networks with clear socially identifiable clusters and networks where nodes seem to associate randomly (Shizuka and Farine, 2016). The heterogeneous nature of the communities in the 2014 network suggests the latter is occurring. Further, it seems that the community detection algorithms utilized here are particularly bad at knowing where to place highly central memberssince those members are so connected and so central to the network.

Looking at the 2016 communities (see Table 3.4), HFC members appear to cluster in about the same way. At a first glance such clustering may seem to imply that their activity was not systematically different in 2016. Upon closer investigation of the composition of community 5 (hereafter the HFC community), we see that 87% of its membership is HFC members (see Table 3.5). Looking at the HFC community, names in bold are *not* members of the HFC. Pete Sessions is an RSC member and the Chair of the Rules Committee; Thomas Massie and Daniel Webster have no faction or leadership affiliations. It is possible that these members are actually part of the HFC but since membership is secret we cannot know for sure. Nine of the 20 HFC members in the HFC community are also RSC members.

The HFC community is organized around the contributions of the House Freedom Caucus. The caucus chairman, Jim Jordan, is the most central member of the community. The HFC community provides clear support for the Clustering Hypothesis. But, what is Pete Sessions, Rules Committee Chairman, doing in this community? It appears, of his 30 LPAC contributions, most went to

rank-and-file members with close reelection races (as predicted by Currinder, 2003), but he also donated to well-known conservatives. These contributions include donations to Tim Huelskamp (HFC), Daniel Webster (who ran against Boehner for Speaker), and Mark Walker (RSC Chairman in the 115th Congress). While one might be tempted to peg these contributions as Sessions' personal indulgence for his ideology, I instead suspect that Sessions is protecting his own self-interest as Rules Committee Chairman. If a full-blown revolution does happen and HFC members continue gaining power, they may be inclined to keep Sessions in a leadership/leadership-adjacent position if he donates to their members–especially if it is against the wishes of current leadership. Sessions disbursements are in line with Baker (1989) and Mann and Ornstein (2006), who argue that LPAC contributions signal support in leadership races.

Turning to the inferential analysis (see Table 3.6), recall that the HFC did not formally exist during the 2014 election cycle.[2] Despite not formally existing, future faction members still knew and supported one another as co-partisans attempting to maintain their majority party status. If so, we should expect some interaction between HFC members in 2014, but we should see significantly more after the faction's formation.

Being a member of the House Freedom Caucus, on average, is not financially fruitful. HFC members are giving and receiving less money. The data

[2]Recall that the reported standard errors are unreliable and are **not** used to evaluate significance of the estimates (Krackhardt, 1988). Significance is evaluated based on a distribution of estimates produced during the semi-partialling plus permutation process (Cranmer et al., 2017).

show that members of the HFC were already receiving less money than other House Republicans before faction formation, but the Receiver-HFC coefficient doubles in 2016. Being a member of the HFC means receiving almost $300 less than the average member in the 2016 LPAC network. The doubling of the receiver coefficient from 2014 to 2016 could be interpreted as punishment within the LPAC network more generally and provide evidence in favor of the Punishment Hypothesis. At minimum, though, the difference implies that formalization of the faction exacerbated the trend of Republicans generally withholding money from these members. Unsurprisingly, HFC members were giving to one another more than other House Republicans in 2014. But, after faction formation, the HFC member receiving money went from receiving about $200 more to about $800 more. That is, HFC members were giving about four times as much money to one another in 2016, providing evidence for the Caucus Support Hypothesis.

Party leaders receive about $200 less on average in 2016, but leaders also give about $2200 more on average (about $300 more than in 2014). Leaders giving significantly more than the average member is certainly in line with the underlying fundraising requirements for being a leader (Powell, 2017; Currinder, 2008). It also makes sense that leaders may not be receiving most of their money via LPACs. Even though the rank-and-file are expected to contribute to the party's wellbeing when possible (Heberlig and Larson, 2005), members raise money for the party in many ways (Powell, 2017). When both members are leaders the relationship is negative, implying that leaders are not donating to

one another at unusual levels.

Since the HFC formed as a split-off from the Republican Study Committee (Wallner, 2017; Rubin, 2017), I included membership in the RSC as explanatory variables as well. The RSC variables were statistically insignificant across both models. With no clear financial relationship, it is possible that this lackluster electoral support was another reason the HFC split from the group.

The last set of results addresses electoral safety. The safer a member is, the more likely she is to donate to her fellow party members in 2016. Safer members donate nearly $700 more and this makes sense since these members are still expected to raise money for the party, but they do not necessarily need to spend it on their own races. More vulnerable members are not donating money to other members, most likely because they need to spend every penny they can get on their own races.

## 3.2 Conclusion

The analysis reveals an active and defensive House Freedom Caucus alongside an overloaded and inconsequential Republican Study Committee. I find that HFC members became more active in member-to-member contributions after they formed their faction. And, HFC members used their LPAC funds to support one another more than to support other House Republicans. I also find evidence that House Republicans punished HFC members, but the HFC clearly worked to minimize the damage. The ability to minimize financial punishment implies the House Freedom Caucus is highly organized and

cohesive in its electoral strategy. Therefore, it makes sense to expect the HFC to continue injecting its members into major policy debates, making demands of leadership, and recruiting like-minded members. To be clear, I have not illuminated the entire story of faction survival with only member-to-member contributions; the HFC almost certainly utilized independent expenditures and coordinated policy statements to distinguish its members as unique candidates for reelection in the 2016 election cycle. This paper serves as a first step in demonstrating a new method for scholars to empirically reveal the electoral tactics of insurgent factions.

In addition to my findings about factions, I also find that House Republican leaders remain active fundraisers. Leaders continue to distribute money to members who toe the party line and are in close races. The distribution of campaign funds is clearly a tool leaders can use to reward or punish members. While the literature on congressional leaders (and parties) may have previously seen financial control over party money as a major tool (Strahan, 2007; Koger and Lebo, 2017), I argue the findings in this paper should indicate a more nuanced conclusion. Certainly, leaders continue to raise and receive funds for their loyal partisan members. But, the ability of party leaders to punish members who are part of organized factions with their party finance tool may be weak–at best.

Table 3.2: House Freedom Caucus Weighted Out-Degree Centrality Scores

| Member | 2016 Centrality | 2014 Centrality | Net 2016 Centrality |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jim Jordan | 2149.53 | 56.99 | 2092.54 |
| Keith Rothfus | 185.44 | No LPAC | 185.44 |
| Gary Palmer | 165.53 | Not an MC | 165.53 |
| Brian Babin | 135.92 | Not an MC | 135.92 |
| Bill Posey | 98.06 | 0.00 | 98.06 |
| Scott DesJarlais | 116.50 | 56.99 | 59.51 |
| Louie Gohmert | 48.54 | 0.00 | 48.54 |
| David Schweikert | 87.38 | 56.99 | 30.38 |
| Mo Brooks | 43.69 | 15.54 | 28.15 |
| Paul Gosar | 23.06 | 0.00 | 23.06 |
| Ted Yoho | 24.27 | 2.59 | 21.68 |
| Tim Huelskamp | 14.56 | 0.00 | 14.56 |
| Mark Sanford | 13.11 | No LPAC | 13.11 |
| Matt Salmon | 53.40 | 41.45 | 11.95 |
| Dave Brat | 9.71 | Freshman MC | 9.71 |
| Alexander Mooney | 4.85 | No LPAC | 4.85 |
| Cynthia Lummis | 2.43 | 0.00 | 2.43 |
| Jim Bridenstine | 0.00 | No LPAC | 0.00 |
| Mark Meadows | 0.00 | No LPAC | 0.00 |
| Jody Hice | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Stevan Pearce | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Curt Clawson | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Tom McClintock | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Scott Perry | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Randy Weber | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Morgan Griffith | 26.70 | 26.94 | −0.24 |
| Mick Mulvaney | 0.00 | 5.18 | −5.18 |
| John Fleming | 33.98 | 41.45 | −7.47 |
| Jeff Duncan | 0.00 | 20.73 | −20.73 |
| Justin Amash | 31.07 | 58.03 | −26.96 |
| Andy Harris | 19.42 | 72.54 | −53.12 |
| Reid Ribble | 39.32 | 198.96 | −159.64 |
| Scott Garrett | 157.77 | 339.90 | −182.13 |

Table 3.3: Communities Detected in 2014 LPAC Network

| | Community | Leadership | HFC | RSC | Unaffiliated | Community Members |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 3 | 19 | 53 | 14 | 70 |
| | 2 | 2 | 2 | 36 | 16 | 53 |
| | 3 | 0 | 2 | 13 | 8 | 21 |
| | 4 | 1 | 3 | 16 | 7 | 24 |
| | 5 | 3 | 2 | 15 | 8 | 24 |
| | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | 7 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | | 9 | 27 | 134 | 54 | 194 |

Table 3.4: Communities Detected in 2016 LPAC Network

| | Community | Leadership | HFC | RSC | Unaffiliated | Community Members |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 3 | 6 | 39 | 23 | 69 |
| | 2 | 3 | 0 | 15 | 13 | 29 |
| | 3 | 2 | 6 | 18 | 9 | 32 |
| | 4 | 2 | 1 | 24 | 23 | 54 |
| | 5 | 0 | 20 | 10 | 2 | 23 |
| Total | | 10 | 33 | 106 | 70 | 207 |

Table 3.5: House Freedom Caucus Community Membership (2016)

| Member | Out-Degree Centrality |
|---|---|
| Jim Jordan | 2149.53 |
| **Pete Sessions** | 440.73 |
| Gary Palmer | 165.53 |
| Scott Garrett | 157.77 |
| Brian Babin | 135.92 |
| Scott DesJarlais | 116.50 |
| Bill Posey | 98.06 |
| David Schweikert | 87.38 |
| Matt Salmon | 53.40 |
| Louie Gohmert | 48.54 |
| Mo Brooks | 43.69 |
| John Fleming | 33.98 |
| Justin Amash | 31.07 |
| Ted Yoho | 24.27 |
| Paul Gosar | 23.06 |
| Tim Huelskamp | 14.56 |
| **Daniel Webster** | 14.56 |
| Dave Brat | 9.71 |
| Jim Bridenstine | 0.00 |
| Mark Meadows | 0.00 |
| Jody Hice | 0.00 |
| Curt Clawson | 0.00 |
| **Thomas Massie** | 0.00 |

Table 3.6: Effects on Member-to-Member Giving within the House Republican Party

| | 2014 Network | 2016 Network |
|---|---|---|
| Giver-HFC | $-123.03^{**}$ | $-217.82^{**}$ |
| | (17.98) | (22.84) |
| Giver-Leader | $1882.37^{**}$ | $2257.92^{**}$ |
| | (29.27) | (36.51) |
| Giver-RSC | $-42.37$ | 1.95 |
| | (22.75) | (22.11) |
| Receiver-HFC | $-135.64^{**}$ | $-277.86^{**}$ |
| | (17.98) | (22.84) |
| Receiver-Leader | 126.48 | $-196.98^{*}$ |
| | (29.27) | (36.51) |
| Receiver-RSC | $-67.18$ | $-80.20$ |
| | (22.75) | (22.11) |
| Both HFC | $179.10^{**}$ | $785.64^{**}$ |
| | (46.59) | (56.31) |
| Both Leaders | $-220.63$ | $-1125.36^{**}$ |
| | (140.48) | (163.68) |
| Both RSC | 43.39 | $-22.83$ |
| | (27.16) | (30.70) |
| Giver Electoral Safety | 62.20 | $645.00^{**}$ |
| | (52.81) | (66.99) |
| Receiver Electoral Safety | $-871.91^{**}$ | $-1375.83^{**}$ |
| | (52.81) | (66.99) |
| Intercept | $741.81^{**}$ | $783.54^{**}$ |
| | (51.84) | (66.18) |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.104 | 0.121 |
| N | 34969 | 41209 |

Standard errors beneath coefficients; $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$

# Appendices

# Appendix A

# Appendix

### A.0.1 House Freedom Caucus Members

Table A.1: Members of the House Freedom Caucus (114th Congress)

| Member | District |
|---|---|
| Amash, Justin | MI-3 |
| Babin, Brian | TX-26 |
| Blum, Rod | IA-1 |
| Brat, David | VA-7 |
| Bridenstine, Jim | OK-1 |
| Brooks, Mo | AL-5 |
| Buck, Ken | CO-4 |
| Clawson, Curt | FL-19 |
| Desantis, Ron | FL-6 |
| DesJarlais, Scott | TN-4 |
| Duncan, Jeff | SC-3 |
| Fleming, John | LA-4 |
| Franks, Trent | AZ-8 |
| Garrett, Scott | NJ-5 |
| Gohmert, Louie | TX-1 |
| Gosar, Paul | AZ-4 |
| Griffith, Morgan | VA-9 |
| Harris, Andy | MD-1 |
| Hice, Jody | GA-10 |
| Huelskamp, Tim | KS-1 |
| Jordan, Jim | OH-4 |

| Member | District |
|---|---|
| Labrador, Raul | ID-1 |
| Loudermilk, Barry | GA-11 |
| Lummis, Cynthia | WY-At Large |
| Meadows, Mark | NC-11 |
| McClintock, Tom | CA-4 |
| Mooney, Alex | WV-2 |
| Mulvaney, Mick | SC-5 |
| Palmer, Gary | AL-6 |
| Pearce, Stevan | NM-2 |
| Perry, Scott | PA-4 |
| Poe, Ted | TX-2 |
| Posey, Bill | FL-8 |
| Ribble, Reid | WI-8 |
| Rothfus, Keith | PA-12 |
| Salmon, Matthew | AZ-5 |
| Sanford, Mark | SC-1 |
| Schweikert, David | AZ-6 |
| Stutzman, Marlin | IN-3 |
| Weber, Randy | TX-14 |
| Yoho, Ted | FL-3 |
| | |

**Note:** The membership of Louie Gohmert during the 114th Congress

is a topic of debate. While he publicly announced he was joining the HFC at the start of the 115th Congress, Christine Ayala reports him as a member in October 2015, in *The Dallas Morning News*. Since it is difficult to verify membership, I do not feel comfortable excluding him from my analysis, since he likely did join at some point during the 114th Congress.

### A.0.2 Eigenvector Centrality Scores

I calculated eigenvector centrality scores as a robustness test.[1] "Actors high in eigenvector centrality ... are tied to others who have high degree centrality and thus can also have access to network flows through their indirect connections" (Smith et al., 2014, 163). This makes sense to measure for the phenomena I am trying to capture. After calculating these scores, however, it appeared that this measure was heavily biased toward ranking members who were receiving a lot of money from a lot of members highly. I have provided the top 25 eigenvector centrality scores for both networks in Table A.2. Full tables available upon request.

[1]Thanks to some thoughtful advice from fellow social network analysis scholars at the Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Political Science Association in 2017 for this suggestion.

Table A.2: Eigenvector Centrality Scores

| Member | 2014 Centrality | Member | 2016 Centrality |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lee Terry | 1 | Carlos Curbelo | 1 |
| David Jolly | 0.949 | Bruce Poliquin | 0.960 |
| Fred Upton | 0.926 | Jeff Denham | 0.923 |
| Jeff Denham | 0.806 | Erik Paulsen | 0.875 |
| Dan Benishek | 0.768 | William Hurd | 0.687 |
| David Valadao | 0.763 | Martha McSally | 0.678 |
| Tim Walberg | 0.728 | Lee Zeldin | 0.666 |
| Eric Cantor | 0.713 | David Valadao | 0.629 |
| Frank Guinta | 0.709 | Barbara Comstock | 0.574 |
| Lynn Jenkins | 0.668 | Kevin Yoder | 0.573 |
| David Joyce | 0.621 | Ryan Zinke | 0.515 |
| Tom Reed | 0.619 | John Katko | 0.487 |
| Joe Heck | 0.582 | Ryan Costello | 0.450 |
| Elise Stefanik | 0.546 | David Young | 0.445 |
| Michael Grimm | 0.509 | Elise Stefanik | 0.418 |
| Renee Ellmers | 0.464 | Scott Garrett | 0.395 |
| Nan Hayworth | 0.413 | Frank Guinta | 0.367 |
| Bill Shuster | 0.412 | Bill Shuster | 0.363 |
| Reid Ribble | 0.396 | Mike Bishop | 0.360 |
| Scott Rigell | 0.393 | Darrell Issa | 0.355 |
| Mimi Walters | 0.389 | Joe Heck | 0.298 |
| Jason T. Smith | 0.356 | Tim Walberg | 0.293 |
| Ed Royce | 0.347 | Tim Huelskamp | 0.265 |
| Roger Williams | 0.341 | Richard Hudson | 0.251 |
| Tom Latham | 0.340 | Michael Bost | 0.234 |

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